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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between schools and community education in Scotland from September 1996 to April 1998, and provides a national overview and identifies examples of effective practice in collaboration and joint provision between schools and community education. The study was undertaken in two stages. The first stage provided a statistical overview and a map of local community education initiatives within the changing local authority contexts. Surveys were conducted with head teachers, schools and local authority chief executives and findings were used to map the different kinds of provision, collaboration and participation taking place in schools. The second stage studied links formed between the ten case-study schools and their local communities, focusing on four categories of activity: school-home-community links, health education, work with troubled youths, and adult education. Findings include the following: (1) the majority of schools focused on the provision of opportunities and facilities as their link with the community education system; (2) very little collaborative practice was reported by schools-what there was centered around the formal curriculum or activities with other schools; (3) most of the Community Education Service managers did not consider schools to be the key players in community education; and (4) in general, three principal factors were found to contribute to effective collaboration-added value achieved with collaboration, extended range of provision due to collaboration, and complementarity in provision. (JPB)

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Interchange 56

Schools and Community Education for the Learning Age

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SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION FOR THE LEARNING AGE

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Introduction

This study is the first major research project to examine the relationship between schools and community education in Scotland. It was undertaken between September 1996 and April 1998, a period of considerable change following local government reorganisation which affected the administration of both the school system and the community education service. The research was designed to provide a national overview and to identify examples of effective practice in collaboration and joint provision between schools and community education. Community education was broadly conceived to include voluntary agencies and other organisations as well as local authority community education services.

The research

Community education embodies a vision of learning at a number of levels: it involves learning as personal development for individual members of communities, learning to develop the community as a community and learning to develop the individual's capabilities to facilitate their participation in public life. A **community education system** will grow out of the diverse institutions, agencies and services, each contributing distinctive specialist knowledge and skills. Schools have potentially a very important role to play in realising the vision of an integrated community education system.

The study reviews the current links between schools and community education, describing collaborative initiatives between schools and voluntary organisations and between schools and the community education service provided by local authorities. It goes on to develop an analysis of these links in terms of the values, purposes, tasks and conditions under which collaborative activity takes place, and generates a framework to describe and compare the diversity of relevant educational practice in Scotland.

The research methods

The research was undertaken in two stages to provide breadth and depth to the findings. The first stage provided a statistical overview and a map of local community education initiatives within the changing local authority contexts. The second stage of the project selected and studied in depth the links formed between the ten case-study schools and their local communities.

In the first stage three national postal surveys were undertaken in 1996/97 to provide an all-round perspective on schools' relationships with local community education providers. The first survey, completed by headteachers or their deputies, collected information about school links with these providers. The second survey asked the Principal Community Education Officers in the 32 local councils to define the key purposes of community education in their area. The third survey sought information from Chief Executive Officers on the local policy context, with particular reference to organisational structure and the extent of decentralised decision making in the 32 local authority areas.

The initial survey of all Scottish schools elicited information on three key elements of school-community links: provision, collaboration and participation. First, three areas of community education **provision** were explored from the school's perspective: the provision of facilities (including community rooms and libraries); the provision of adult learning opportunities (including parent education and guidance for adults in the community); and the provision of opportunities for young people (including youth groups and after-school clubs). Second, information was collected on school **collaboration** with community education providers: which providers did schools work with most often to develop, manage, deliver, fund and evaluate four core activities, that is, the formal curriculum, the hidden curriculum, extra-curricular activities and support for individual pupils. The third area explored was **participation in decision making.** Information was collected on representative groups who were involved in schools, including School Boards, Parent-Teacher Associations and pupil councils, and whether and to what extent they were involved in school development planning.

The survey of local authority chief executives provided information on the degree to which the management of services was decentralised and differentiated in each local authority area. The survey of community education officers illustrated the order of priorities for each authority's community education service.

The findings from the three surveys were analysed to produce a map of the different kinds of provision, collaboration and participation taking place in schools, and these findings were set within a structured local policy framework. The full results of this stage in the research were presented in the interim report *Schools and Community Education: the Mapping Study.*

In the second stage, 10 case studies of different community education 'locations' were selected, using criteria derived from the mapping study. These focused on four different categories of collaborative activity: school-home-community links; health education; work with troubled children and young people; adult education. These activities were known to be providing challenging opportunities for partnership and collaboration in many schools as they frequently required particular kinds of expertise which most teachers do not have. Moreover, these activities were areas of policy interest when the research was undertaken.

The schools selected as case studies had taken part in at least one of these collaborative activities. Representatives of the partners and participants in the collaborative activity including the headteacher and teachers, parents and pupils, local authority managers, community and voluntary workers were interviewed in each of the

10 localities.

A case-study design was chosen as it provided a means of focusing on individual sets of complex relationships between schools and community education within the specific policy context of their local authority. It allowed for the exploration of perceptions of the relationship as experienced by different players in each case-study context within a limited time period. The use of case-study method does not provide a good basis for generalisation but it does provide detailed data about particular cases which provides a basis for interpretation.

Findings from stage 1: the mapping exercise

The relationships between schools and their communities in Scotland: elements of provision, collaboration, participation

What do you think would encourage schools to engage in more collaborative practice?

The overwhelming majority of schools focused on the provision of opportunities and facilities (such as accommodation) as their link with the community education system. The provision of such links was designed to enhance, or at least not disturb, the school's core business of educating children.

Very little collaborative practice was reported by schools. Most of the collaborative practice reported centred around the formal curriculum and involved the creation and delivery of activities in conjunction with other schools. Only one fifth of all school collaborative activity was undertaken with non-school agencies such as community groups, local authority community education services and voluntary agencies.

Overall, schools were least likely to encourage members of the community to participate in decision making in the school; even where members of the community were involved in school governance and management this tended to be more representative than participative.

The local authority contexts

Why might managers hold values that are not in line with policy statements?

Just over half of the 25 Chief Executives who responded to the survey reported that their authority had adopted some elements of a corporate approach to management while the remainder (10) reported that management was organised according to specialist services. As far as decentralisation of services was concerned, half the sample reported that they had introduced several measures, including the setting up of area offices and/or 'shops' and local community forums.

Most of the Community Education Service managers did not consider schools to be the key players in community education: the partners most likely to be collaborating with the service were voluntary agencies and community groups. Community education provision was organised in two distinctly different ways, either by integrated area-based services or by specialist services: services in 15 authorities were area-based, six were specialist-based while services in a further four authorities were mixed. Whichever type of organisation was in place, most policy statements emphasised the provision of learning for individuals as the priority; this was in contrast to many individual responses from managers which focused on the value of community participation as the priority.

Findings from stage 2: the case studies

Schools and collaborative practice

What kind of activities do you think best lend themselves to collaboration between schools and community education?

The case studies identified examples of effective practice in collaboration and joint provision between schools and community education, and focused on four types of activity: adult education; health education; home/school/community links; work with troubled young people. The study found that in general there were three principal factors which contributed to effective collaboration:

- *added value from collaboration:* effective collaboration was sustained where all partners were able to achieve 'more' with 'less'. This was exemplified in the adult education activities where resources of space, facilities and staff expertise had been used to provide more opportunities for both adults and pupils
- *extended range of provision due to collaboration:* only through collaboration in the health education programmes and the home/school/community projects were providers able to offer the sufficient breadth in the scale and scope of interventions
- *complementarity in provision:* the most demanding form of collaboration was required to deal with situations involving complex social issues such as social exclusion. In particular work with troubled young people required multi-organisational approaches. A major constraint to effective collaboration was lack of time and money. This was especially evident in the voluntary sector where dependence on short-term external funding, subject to competitive bidding, was a key constraint in collaborative work with troubled young people.

It was hypothesised that organisations would need to share, or have complementary, values, purposes, tasks and conditions for collaboration to be effective, and for satisfactory partnerships to be developed. However, the research showed how ostensibly the same collaborative activity may:

- be underpinned by rather different values
- have different purposes
- define tasks differentially in order to realise these purposes
- deliver community education under a variety of conditions.

Figure 1 on page 5 summarises these key differences by comparing the same activity in different case-study schools, in terms of values, purposes, tasks and conditions. Thus partners working together may have conflicting values and purposes: they may see the task differently and they may be operating under different conditions.

Why would it be beneficial for partners to have shared or complementary values and purposes before they embark on a collaborative project?

The study has highlighted some of the resultant tensions between potential partners:

- in adult education activities there were tensions between those committed primarily to supporting the academic achievement of pupils and those whose aim additionally was to increase the involvement of the wider community
- in the projects designed to promote home/school/community links there were conflicting perspectives of parent involvement: for some, there was an expectation that parents would learn to extend an interest in the development of their own children's education by learning how to work as unpaid class-room helpers; for others, the emphasis was placed on

- the recognition of the parent's own educational needs and the development of appropriate learning experiences for the parent as an individual
- another constraint to effective collaboration was the competing professional cultures and traditions which limited the type of collaboration considered feasible.

Figure 1: Summary of key differences in the activities

	Adult Education	Health Education	Home/School Community Links	Troubled Young People
Values	■ proactively promoting equality of opportunity vs. ■ reactively responding to community	■ achieving measurable educational outcomes vs. ■ collaboration to achieve academic & social goals	■ meeting needs of parents as well as children vs. ■ parents' role to be involved in education of children	■ social & academic education for all vs. ■ academic education for majority
Purposes	■ providing education for pupils vs. ■ providing for whole community	■ promoting sense of community vs. ■ providing information	■ promoting parents' own education vs. ■ supporting children's education	■ involving young people in decision making vs. ■ minimising effect of problematic behaviour
Tasks	■ providing responsive education vs. ■ school-focused education	■ active collaboration vs. ■ providing services	■ community education best able to involve parents vs. ■ headteacher best able to involve parents	■ developing all pupils socially & academically vs. ■ subcontracting out of difficult pupils
Conditions	■ provision of programme vs. ■ participation in decision making	■ promoting academic standards vs. ■ promoting safe & friendly environment for all	■ utilising skills of identified community worker vs. ■ no additional staff resources available to school	■ collaborative sharing of expertise vs. ■ complementarity of expertise

In what other respects might organisations benefit from collaboration?

Nevertheless the research findings suggest that the benefits to pupils and to the wider community from the different models of collaboration were considerable:

- the opportunity to develop a broader curriculum
- making available school facilities to the wider community
- access to a wider range of skills and expertise

- the coordination of a range of different services which contribute to educational work in communities
- the growth in adult confidence which develops from the wide conception of their role as educators
- the development of employment as a way out of poverty through a range of programmes
- an understanding that the school is part of the community and the recognition of the complementarity of the contribution that each can make to the other.

The local authority context

The management structure in local authorities has had an effect in each area on the strategic planning for community education as provided through the community education service and through community and voluntary groups. Severe budget cuts, on top of local government reorganisation in 1995, have led local authorities to experiment with new management structures, only some of which have been successful in developing and implementing new policies for the delivery of community education.

The role of the Community Education Service varies across and within local authorities. In some areas there was an emphasis on the *strategic development* of work in terms of commissioning, monitoring and evaluating the services provided by community and voluntary groups. In other areas community education service workers were *involved directly* in the provision of community education. There was a diversity of perceptions among local authority managers on the purpose of community education, some aiming for universal provision, others targeting resources on areas and initiatives. There was also a diversity of arrangements for the delivery of community education.

The general reduction in funding had led to a review of priorities in the Community Education Service and new ways of working had been introduced. Several authorities had focused on the development of home-school-community links. Some schools in these areas were being encouraged and supported by the authority to develop parental education through projects run by Community Education Service which promoted parental involvement in their children's education and in community organisations. With the development of inter-departmental cooperation, several case-study authorities were developing links between the Community Education Service and Departments of Economic Development to provide vocational training for adults and young people which would support regeneration and provide continuing education. In addition, new approaches were being developed in youth work to give young people more 'voice' in the affairs of institutions and the community.

The relationship between councillors and their communities was also changing. Local authorities were searching for new ways to consult and involve their local communities: councillors in some areas were more involved in meeting local representatives and seeing for themselves the outcomes of local projects. The Community Education Service was perceived as having a strategic role to play in supporting community participation in emergent forums which, in some local authorities, were taking on a central role in local democratic renewal.

Overall, strategic thinking by local authorities on the relationship between schools and community education was at an early stage of development. Consequently

many collaborative activities between schools and community education were being developed in practice-based environments without the support of a council policy

In your experience what reinforces institutional boundaries ?

Frameworks for understanding the variety of practice

The analysis of the data relating to collaborative practice in schools and the pattern of provision in local authorities lead to the conclusion that differing conceptions of the purposes of community education, and the structures required to fulfill these purposes, turn on two fundamental dimensions of practice:

- institutional boundaries
- pedagogic purpose.

What is the pedagogic purpose and practice in your organisation?

Underpinning these dimensions were different ideas about the role of local authorities in encouraging participation in local decision making. In addition the rather different, even rival, professional socialisation and traditions of teachers on the one hand and community education workers on the other, illuminated the analysis. First, however, a brief description of the two dimensions of practice is provided at the two levels of analysis, the school and the local authority.

Institutional boundaries at the school level

Each profession defines itself in terms of specialist skills and knowledge. Such specialisation helps to distinguish one profession from another. It also separates the professional from the lay member of the public. In understanding different approaches to collaborative practice it is important to acknowledge the existence of *professional boundaries* and to examine whether such distinctions of professional knowledge and skills are sharply defined or blurred.

Pedagogic purpose and practice at the school level

The orientation of the community educator may be particularistic, focusing upon the personal and educational development of the individual, whether pupil, young person or adult. Alternatively it may be holistic, with a focus on the development of the community as a whole and a vision of learning as having a dual purpose in the development of the individual and the community.

Institutional boundaries at the local authority level

Services may be organised in such a way that boundaries are certain to arise between different parts of the community education system (e.g. between schools and the Community Education Service) or there may be no strategic plan to bring rival departments together.

Pedagogic purpose and practice at the local authority level

The model provides a continuum of purpose and practice, from an orientation towards community development which aims to encourage effective and responsible citizenship or towards an individualistic orientation that is concerned with universal provision of education rather than being responsive to the articulated and the unvoiced requirements of the community. The relationship between these two dimensions can be conceived of as a matrix of four quadrants in which the different purposes of community education can be characterised as follows (see Fig. 2, page 8):

Quadrant A Individualistic perspective/High institutional boundaries (student development)

The purpose of community education is designed to support the work of schools and focuses upon addressing the problems which frustrate the progress in the learning of students. Institutions define roles and rules in ways which can create a boundary between the school and other professionals, and between the school and community education professionals and the community.

Which model of community education predominates in your organisation?

Quadrant B Holistic perspective/High institutional boundaries (citizen development)

In this category the community education system recognises the challenges of social and economic regeneration: it is involved in education and training to enable members of the community not only to gain employment but also to improve the quality of individual lives. Yet professional and institutional traditions can still frustrate collaborative working.

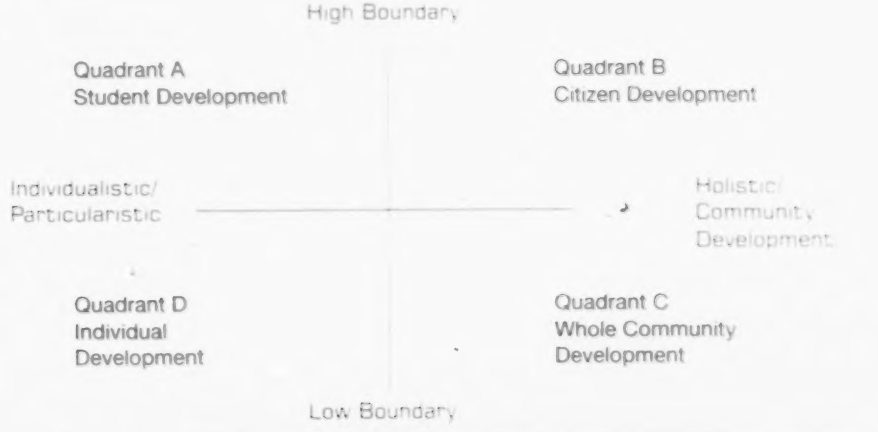
Quadrant C Holistic perspective/Low institutional boundaries (whole community development)

In this perspective the local authority, the institutions and agencies recognise the importance of community development as well as lifelong learning. They form collaborative partnerships to ensure effective provision of education to enable members of the community to participate as citizens in the practice of local democracy.

Quadrant D Individualistic perspective/Low institutional boundaries (individual development)

Community education seeks to support the learning needs of all individuals in the community: pupils; young people outside school; their parents; and the life-long learning needs of adults in the community. To support these needs institutions strive to become responsive to the expressed needs of the community and to establish collaborative patterns of working with other organisations and agencies.

Fig 2. Pedagogic purpose and practice



Although some case studies provide examples of one model shaping the practice of the system as a whole for that area, other case studies show that differ-

ent models can coexist in the same authority. The local authority may adopt a particular model in the development of its strategic policy while at the same time individual schools within that local authority area can adopt a very different model in the direct provision of education. The data suggests that the distribution of interests and power in a locality will define which model predominates.

In examining the data, it was found that working partnerships always involved the agency of the people who were working together and the structures which made such interactions possible. Using the framework developed on page 8, the key factors in particular models of partnership in community education are described and summarised in the following section.

High boundaries are the result of:

- management organisation and process where the two partners have separate spheres of operation
- declining resources which make it necessary for the partners to concentrate on what is considered their core business
- situations where professional roles are in conflict
- divergent views on the role of the participants in the activity, or the providers of the service, or both
- specific groups being given priority for inclusion by the partners in the collaboration, for example, the parents of pupils attending the school or only poor people.

Low boundaries are the result of:

- management organisation and processes which place value on joint decision making by the various partners
- a commitment by institutions to collaborative working which includes the wider community
- institutional responsiveness to the articulated views of the community
- a shared view of the roles of either participants in the activity, or the providers of the service, or both
- an appreciation of the strengths to be gained from the complementary roles of professionals workers.

An individualistic approach is the result of:

- an emphasis on the individual growth of participants
- no means for the community to raise problems of concern to them
- not involving people in decision making
- not utilising or valuing the skills of the community
- universalistic, individually focused provision
- predetermining policy and practice objectives
- a focus on income-generating work that is responsive to the demands of the most articulate.

A community development approach is the result of:

- having mechanisms for, and a commitment to, responding effectively to the issues and problems identified by the community
- the community having control over, or a least influence on, decision making and having the structures in place that allow such decisions to be implemented
- having methods for developing the 'voice' of socially excluded groups and communities
- a commitment to community participation in decision making that leads to responsive, demand-led provision.

Overall, then, the analysis suggests that it is possible for partnerships to exist in a wide range of circumstances and situations but that these are much more likely to be developed and sustained where boundaries are low and a community development approach is taken. Such collaborative partnerships are more likely to encourage the development of democratic participation in local communities. This development will help to overcome the barriers faced by those currently excluded from lifelong learning and thus contribute to the task of tackling of social exclusion.

In what ways does your experience of effective partnerships reflect this model?

Discussion: towards a vision of community education

In the global age of information technology, learning will be at the centre for individuals, institutions and communities, as all will need to acquire new skills and capabilities to equip them for a world of continuing change, risk and uncertainty. The research findings suggest that community education is particularly well placed to address the needs of the learning age, that is of developing the capabilities of individuals, of reaching out to build networks of collaborative learning and support, and of enabling community development and democratic renewal. The essence of learning in such a learning society is for citizens to recover their sense of agency, to learn to take more control over their lives and to work cooperatively with others to renew their communities.

A pedagogy of learning communities

What do you think the vision of community education should be?

Reflecting on the meaning of community education draws teachers and community educators into a discussion which focuses on the process of learning. Community education embodies a vision of learning at a number of levels.

Lifelong learning for personal development

Individuals continue their learning throughout their lives to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Community educators emphasise the process of learning as growing out of experience and leading into action for personal development. The purpose and outcome of active learning may be a particular 'competence' which alters our capacity to intervene, but the central purpose of learning is to enable the development of our distinctive agency as a human being.

Learning as a social process

The vision of community education encompasses an understanding that people flourish as individuals when they learn with, and through, others in the community. The unfolding agency of the self always grows out of interaction with others. It is *inescapably a social creation.* The possibility of shared understanding requires individuals not only to value others but to create the communities in which mutuality and thus the conditions for learning can flourish. The purpose of learning is to learn to make the communities without which individuals and others cannot grow and develop.

Learning to participate in a democratic community

Community educators routinely refer to the purposes of learning as empowering members of the community as citizens to participate in

democratic decision making in their communities. They suggest that we need to learn to create communities as a democratic sphere because they create the conditions, the understandings and agreements which enable individuals and their relationships to grow and develop over time. Such agreements constitute the foundations of citizenship: who is to be a member and what are the defining qualities? What are to be their rights and obligations to each other? What are to be the rules for determining the distribution of status and opportunity to develop capacities?

Equality of opportunity

The dilemmas of purpose are especially revealed in discussions about who community education is for. Some are concerned that community education is seen as having only a social welfare function and targeted only at the poor, when it should be accessible to all. Others, however, argue that in an ideal world community education would be for everyone but that in terms of available resources and local authority priorities, community education will need to focus services on supporting disadvantaged communities, empowering local people by giving them the confidence and skills to participate in local decision making within their community. This broad community-based programme includes working in partnership with the economic regeneration team to improve job opportunities, and a new role in facilitating the work of decentralised committees and forums.

Strategic purposes: learning for renewal

What do you think the strategic purposes of community education should be?

The findings from the case studies suggest that the need to clarify a sense of direction is leading to an emphasis on three strategic purposes:

- *Parents as partners:* professionals across the community education system are increasingly recognising the significance of parents, as complementary educators enhancing their children's learning, as partners in the management and governance of schools, and as learners, all these activities contributing to the development of the community
- *Community development:* this involves being responsive to community needs in the widest sense, supporting local involvement in democratic processes by working with and through local organisations. Community development is about supporting and encouraging people to become actively involved in the community regeneration of their area
- *Democratic renewal:* at the heart of the new reconceptualising is the perceived potential of community education to contribute to the process of democratic renewal now underway in Scotland. Some local authorities recognise the potential; community education is an under-utilised service as far as democratic participation skills are concerned. Others have proceeded further, perceiving in an active local democracy an opportunity to build a learning partnership with the community for social and economic regeneration.

Informing the debate about meaning and purpose is an emergent reconceptualising of community education. Teachers and community education workers can express a set of purposes which captures the potential of community education to contribute to the issues which lie at the heart of social and economic regeneration. This implies a commitment to:

- inclusiveness

- recognising social as well as academic goals
- raising expectations through educational achievement
- valuing complementary professional skills
- involving local people in decision making
- democratic participation and active citizenship.

How can we best develop plurality and complementarity?

Limits, plurality and complementarity

The community education system grows out of diverse institutions, agencies and services, each contributing their distinctive specialist knowledge and skills. It is possible for a school to be immersed in all the layers of purpose for community education and community regeneration. Yet, this research suggests that institutions and services believe there are core functions which shape all their work. Schools, for example, face statutory constraints which, in the last resort, limit what they can contribute to the community education system as a whole. However if they are to contribute their distinctive quality they need to work collaboratively in partnership with others. This study of the work of schools and of their collaborative activities shows that in each community there is a great diversity of learning needs which can only be addressed through a variety of professional skills. Plural interests and needs require the complementarity of specialisms. Although joint professional development can reinforce the understanding and valuing of collaboration, the threats and pressures facing the community education system can accentuate the limits of professional boundaries. The analysis of plurality and complementarity has significant lessons for the professional training and development of teachers and community education workers.

What do you think an integrated community education system in your area would achieve?

Conclusion

The argument arising from the research is essentially this: schools and community education have distinct but complementary roles to play in the new Scotland in promoting active and inclusive citizenship and in combating social exclusion. Although schools and community education have different kinds of 'core business', they are both informed by a fundamental commitment to the comprehensive principle which requires that the ideal of education for all is supported by a commitment to selective intervention which ensures that education can indeed be for everyone. Democratic renewal depends on a dual commitment by the new Scottish state: to use schooling to help to prepare young people to become democratic citizens, and to support and enhance people's capacity in civil society to be active citizens in a democracy. In order to promote active citizenship and combat social exclusion in the learning age, any consideration of the evolving relationship between schools and community education in Scotland must be placed firmly in the dual context of both globalisation and democratic renewal. Schooling is a necessary but not sufficient condition for this civic and political reconstruction.

The full potential of schools and community education can only be realised when they are both seen as essential elements within a coherent and comprehensive *community education system*, i.e. understood as a way of organising education and making available relevant and responsive opportunities for life-long learning which meets the needs, interests and aspirations of individual communities. This has always been part of the philosophy and pedagogy of community education and of the distinctively Scottish traditions of democratic intellectualism and common sense. This, in essence, is the re-visioning of community education which the research team advocates.

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Further information

If you have views on **Interchange** and/or wish to find out more about ERU s research programme, contact the Educational Research Unit (ERU), The Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, Room 2B, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

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